

Section 4



GOAL SETTING AND PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Key Points

- 1 Defining a Vision
- 2 Writing a Personal Mission Statement
- 3 Writing SMART Goals to Support a Vision and Mission



If you do not know where you are going, every road will get you nowhere.

Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State

Introduction

Successful Army leaders such as George Washington, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Colin Powell did not attain greatness by luck. They knew what they believed and where they wanted to go. They were men with solid values and defined goals, as well as a clear vision and sense of mission. Because of their resolve, when they were tested, they were ready to meet the challenges they faced.

As a college student and ROTC Cadet, you face many decisions in the next few years that will affect the course of your life. This section will discuss how you can develop a vision for your life based on your values, write a personal mission statement, and set concrete, attainable personal goals. GEN Colin Powell noted the value of vision when he wrote down his 13 “rules for command.”

GEN Colin Powell’s Rules for Command

1. It ain’t as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning.
2. Get mad, then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.
4. It can be done!
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don’t let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can’t make someone else’s choices. You shouldn’t let someone else make yours.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision. Be demanding.
12. Don’t take counsel of your fears or nay sayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

GEN Colin Powell

Critical Thinking

Based on GEN Powell’s rules, what do you think he values? How could guidelines like these help you at college?

vision

a vivid description of the future that focuses your efforts—your vision is a reference point to guide your decisions, planning, and actions for the future

Which Words Best Express Your Values?

Ambitious
Adaptable
Career-minded
Capable
Courageous
Family-focused
Flexible
Honest
Independent
Logical
Obedient
Responsible
Self-controlled
Health-focused
Environmentally conscious
Spiritually focused
Others?

mission

your purpose—personal and professional—which guides your planning and actions as you put your vision into practice

Defining a Vision

Your **vision** is the guiding theme of your personal life and professional career. Your vision is a long-term picture that establishes your priorities for making short-term decisions. Your vision grows out of your values and, as a Cadet, from the core Army Values you've already studied in previous sections.

Some people ask: "Why have a vision? Why does it matter?" The answer is that vision provides direction for your life and context for your decisions. If you don't know where you are going—any road can take you there. To lead people—whether fellow Cadets, fellow students, Soldiers, or employees—you need to know where you want to go. Vision motivates people to perform to their potential and beyond. A vision reduces the likelihood of complacency, drifting, and mediocre performance.

Your strong vision also makes you a role model. When your subordinates see that you have a clearly defined vision in your life and career, they will imitate you. When you become a second lieutenant, your Soldiers will look to you and your vision to provide the framework and context not only for your command decisions but also for the orders you give and the work you ask them to perform.

Many people and organizations find it helpful to record their vision as a vision statement. This forces you to ask yourself some profound questions: What should your vision statement say? What do you want to be known for? What are the most important things in your life? What do you want to achieve? Think also about the model you will want to project to your fellow students, Cadets, and, when you become an officer, to your Soldiers. Your vision should include what matters most to you, so when you write your vision statement, you need to reflect on and clarify your values. Think about the words that best express who you want to be.

A vision statement is usually very concise—no more than a sentence or two. So you'll need to select only about five or six values or characteristics to go into your vision statement (see the marginal text for a partial list).

Of course, your priorities will shift as you get older, gain experience, and advance in your career. That's why you should think about your vision statement as a living document, something that can and will change with time. You are not carving your vision in stone. Plan to revisit your statement, reflect on your priorities, and make changes every year or two.

Here's an example of a possible vision statement: *"I am determined to be the best ROTC Cadet among my peers, the best student to my teachers, the best athlete to my coaches, and the best son (or daughter) to my parents that I can possibly be. I pledge to use my strengths to better my weaknesses in all areas of my life."*

Sounds like a promise, doesn't it? That's what a vision statement is: a commitment to your future, put into words to help guide your efforts. Can you draft your vision statement now?

Writing a Personal Mission Statement

The next step is to develop your **mission** statement. A mission statement describes your fundamental purpose. It guides the planning and implementation of your vision. It's a description that encompasses your own personal objectives, long-term goals, and guiding philosophy—all of which touch your professional life, as well.

In a corporate environment, a mission statement is a description of what an organization wants to accomplish in business. Similarly, your own mission statement should embrace your personal and professional goals. And the best goals come from what *motivates* you.

Once you have reflected on your values and your motivations, you should be able to craft your mission statement without too much trouble. Remember, a mission statement should not be the Ten Commandments for the rest of your life. It should project perhaps three to five years into the future. Just as you will do with your vision, you should revisit your mission statement and adjust it as your life circumstances change—because they *will* change.

Here’s an example of a possible mission statement that supports the vision statement on the previous page: *“During the next four years in college I want to achieve excellent grades (B+ or higher) in all my coursework. I will also seek experience in a leadership role in a club, team, or activity, and I will actively seek internships, networking opportunities, and other hands-on experience. In addition, I will volunteer in at least one community service organization on a regular basis. I will keep in close touch with my family as often as possible and help my parents with my younger siblings.”*

Notice anything? The mission statement takes the aims of the vision statement and makes them more concrete. The tone of the mission statement is confident and determined. Do any of the aims expressed in this mission statement seem unreasonable or unreachable?

Now, you try it!

Writing SMART Goals to Support a Vision and Mission

To bring your vision to life and accomplish your personal mission, you need to do one more thing: set some definite **goals**. One way to think about these goals is to think of your vision and mission as your life *strategy* and your goals as those *tactics* that will help you work within and toward that strategy.

Think of goals as the dots you connect to create the picture described by your vision and mission. They are the *short-term milestones* that will keep you on track and help you achieve your greater mission.

But how can you write effective goals? One technique is to write SMART goals, which you read about in the section on time management. SMART goals have built-in features that help you attain them. They are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound. Here’s an example of how to write a SMART goal.

If your vision, is to be an excellent student and your mission in support of that is to attain excellent grades in all four years of college, how exactly do you get there? A SMART goal that implements those vision and mission statements might be *to get an A in math this semester by joining and regularly attending a study group by the third week of the term*. Notice how the goal sets a specific measurable benchmark and an attainable deadline. You can write goals for each of your classes and activities, if you find that helpful.

What Motivates You?

Money
Recognition
Desire to please
Self-satisfaction
Self-worth
Sense of accomplishment
Fear of failure
Physical needs
Faith
Others?

goals

things you set out to do or achieve—short or long term—to fulfill your mission and realize your vision

SMART Goals:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time bound

Critical Thinking

What is the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement? Why are both important?

The last step in this process is to prioritize your SMART goals. Put them in order of importance, time due or time required to complete, overall attainability, cost, geographic location, outside help required, or other organizing scheme. You should not randomly list your goals; otherwise, you'll waste time and effort. Whether you do the small stuff first and the challenging ones later—or vice versa—is up to you, but *organize* your time and effort.



Leadership is not magnetic personality—that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not “making friends and influencing people”—that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to higher sights, the raising of a person’s performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.

Peter Drucker



CONCLUSION

Crafting a personal vision statement, mission statement, and SMART goals is a key step in developing your identity as an adult, a college student, an ROTC Cadet, and a future Army leader. Vision, mission, and goals will help bring out the best qualities of your personality and make you a desirable role model for your peers and your subordinates in the future.

You never know the limit of your potential until you reach it—and then step further. A clear vision, a specific mission, and definite goals are important tools that will help you reach and then exceed your expectations.

Learning Assessment

1. Define vision and describe a vision statement.
2. Describe a personal mission statement and its purpose.
3. Describe SMART goals and how they support a vision and mission.

Key Words

vision

mission

goals

References

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